

Message Text

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TO SECSTATE WASHDC 4699
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AMCONSUL MADRAS

CONFIDENTIAL NEW DELHI 3953

EO 11652: GDS

TAGS: PINT, IN

SUBJ: EMBASSY COMMENT TO BOMBAY 671 (NEW DELHI 3950)

ON GUJARAT IN THE WAKE OF THE COLLAPSE OF THE JANATA
FRONT GOVERNMENT

1. THE MAIN QUESTION ON THE GUJARAT SITUATION THAT REMAINS TO BE ANSWERED IS HOW LONG CONGRESS-R LEADERS WILL REQUIRE TO ABSORB SUFFICIENT DEFECTORS FROM JANATA FRONT AND INDEPENDENT RANKS TO ENABLE THEM TO FORM A GOVERNMENT. THE CONGRESS-R MP QUOTED IN NEW DELHI 3777 PREDICTED THREE TO FOUR MONTHS. A SENIOR GUJARAT STATE CIVIL SERVANT TOLD AN EMBOFF THAT ONLY SIX TO TWELVE WEEKS WILL BE REQUIRED. HE SAID THAT THE GUJARAT GOVERNOR HAS ADVISED THE CENTER NOT TO SEND AN ADMINISTRATOR TO RUN THE STATE (AS IS CUSTOMARY) IN VIEW OF THE SHORT TIME PERIOD ANTICIPATED BEFORE THE FORMATION OF A CONGRESS-R GOVERNMENT. GPCC PRESIDENT AND EX-CONGRESS-O CHIEF MINISTER, HITENDRA DESAI, IS THE LEADING CANDIDATE FOR THE NEXT CHIEF MINISTER. HE DEFECTED FROM CONGRESS-O TO CONGRESS-R LAST YEAR FOLLOWING THE JUNE STATE ELECTIONS.

2. THE TOPPLING OF THE LAST OPPOSITION STATE GOVERNMENT IN INDIA HAS SPARKED A NEW SPURT OF DEFECTIONS NOT ONLY IN

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GUJARAT BUT IN OTHER STATES AS WELL. NINE (MOSTLY EX-KMLP)

INDEPENDENTS, ONE CONGRESS-O AND ONE JANA SANGH STATE
LEGISLATORS HAVE SO FAR EITHER JOINTED CONGRESS-R OR
ANNOUNCED THEIR SUPPORT FOR CONGRESS-R IN GUJARAT OVER THE
LAST SEVERAL DAYS. SINCE MAY 13, 29 BLD STATE LEGISL-

ATORS IN ORISSA, ONE CONGRESS-O MLC IN BIHAR, ONE DMK MLC
IN TAMIL NADU AND ONE AKALI DAL MLA IN THE PUNJAB HAVE ABAN-
DONED THEIR PARTIES.

MOST HAVE ANNOUNCED THEIR INTENTION TO JOIN CONGRESS-R.
THE ONGOING DEFACTION VIRUS AMONG INDIA'S VARIETY OF
OPPOSITION PARTIES CANNOT BUT FURTHER DEFLATE PROSPECTS
AND MORALE AMONG THE NON-COMMUNIST OPPOSITION LEADERS
WHO ARE ATTEMPTING TO PATCH TOGETHER A MERGED OPPOSITION
PARTY IN INDIA.

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